

My name is Christina Sweeney and I am a resident and parent in Danbury here to advocate for our public school system to receive the funding it needs to educate all our children.

I am here today as a parent of two high school students to ask that the legislature increase funding for Danbury Public Schools and NOT support funding for the proposed charter school in Danbury.

Neither the city of Danbury nor the state have met their financial obligations to the public school system. Danbury Public Schools have not had a fully-funded municipal budget in nearly 20 years. The state's ECS formula has not been fully funded either, which has exacerbated the problem at the local level.

When you don't adequately fund the education budget, it has ripple effects. Our teachers are already stretched thin. The physical conditions in most of our schools are untenable - heating that doesn't work, cooling that is non-existent (except in the winter), overcrowded hallways, broken elevators. Add to that a lack of money for basic classroom supplies - too many of our teachers rely on Donors Choose to outfit their classrooms. Our current public school system needs the state to adequately and equitably fund the budget to ensure our students receive the services and resources they need to be successful.

A charter school will take much-needed money away from our current schools and most of the children in Danbury in the following ways: transportation costs, special education costs, and staffing in the form of a nurse and custodians. The loss of any students to the charter school will not have a measurable positive impact on the current staffing and space needs of the district because students would come from across the district. This is only going to exacerbate the current financial stress on our existing public schools.

A charter school that serves 6% of the district cannot come at the cost of inflicting more economic damage to the district, a cost that only hurts the majority of students. I would add, the charter school issue in Danbury is also very divisive and contentious. There is a very vocal, well-organized, and well-funded minority whose goal is to establish a charter school in Danbury. This has become a very polarizing and political issue, but the majority of residents and parents are interested only in ensuring we strengthen the schools that we already have, the schools that serve all of our students.

If you want to put more education dollars into Danbury, please do it by providing funding to the public schools as we face the significant operating costs for opening a much-needed 2nd high school campus and program expansion at the high school level to prepare our students for the future.

Christina Sweeney
19 Ironwood Drive
Danbury, CT 06811